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Hopkins research for CIA involved allergic substances

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The Johns Hopkins University's involvement with a secret research project of the Central Intelligence Agency apparently dealt with a study of highly "allergic substances," a spokesman for the university said yesterday.

CIA records, examined last week by the university's general counsel, Estelle A. Fishbein, gave no indication that human subjects were involved in the Hopkins portion of the agency's project, called MK-ULTRA.

The research work at the Hopkins took place between November, 1958, and August, 1962, the university spokesman, Robert F. Hewes, said. No total dollar figure was listed for the cost of the research and no names of Hopkins researchers were disclosed on the documents inspected by Mrs. Fishbein, the spokesman said.

One sheet of paper reportedly did refer to an unnamed professor of chemistry.

The Hopkins had been notified by the CIA August 18 that it may have been involved in the agency's behavioral-modification research and drug experiments, which were a part of MK-ULTRA. However, that code name was an umbrella term for a number of different kinds of research efforts secretly financed by the intelligence agency between 1953 and 1964.

In all, about 80 institutions in the country, including the University of Maryland, were informed by the CIA last month of their possible involvement with the secret program. Each institution was invited to inspect the records at the Northern Virginia headquarters of the agency.

The University of Maryland's involvement was traced to a 1956 Medical School study which may have been aimed at arresting the spread of cancer cells.

Records of CIA-financed research at the two universities are vague because,

the CIA has indicated, most of the existing MK-ULTRA documents consist largely of financial records and add only fragmentary information on the nature of each institution's research project.

Before these financial data were recently found, it was believed that virtually all of the MK-ULTRA records had been destroyed by the CIA in 1973, according to the agency's general counsel, Anthony A. Lapham.

The documents inspected by Mrs. Fishbein for the Hopkins were vouchers and expense forms, Mr. Hewes said. She estimated that the outlays recorded on these papers averaged about \$4,000 a year.

She noted wryly that there was an "inordinate" amount of paper work dealing with an \$18.26 discrepancy.

One of the sheets she inspected indicated that the purpose of the Hopkins work was "to purify and characterize allergen materials of extremely high potency which show promise of greater potentiality, and have greater effect on programs involving studies on the general adaptation syndrome."

Presumably, these words mean that the Hopkins study dealt with highly-allergic substances, Mr. Hewes said.

There was nothing in the sheets of paper that conveyed much more information than that, and there was no indication of what department of the university might have been associated with this work, he said.

Nor was there any information to indicate how the money for the Hopkins research was transmitted to the university.

In light of these facts, Mr. Hewes said, there is no way the Hopkins can search its own records to obtain more detailed information about the research.